



Town of Arlington

John D. Leone, Moderator

51 Irving St.,
Arlington, Mass 02476
Telephone: (781)-648-2345
Jleone@town.arlington.ma.us

March 4, 2021

Dear Town Meeting Members,

Thank you for taking the Town Meeting Member (TMM) survey after the Special Virtual Town Meeting (VTM) last fall. Your responses were instructive and have helped focus our efforts to make this year's virtual spring Annual Town Meeting more productive. Below is a summary of the survey results and our plans moving forward, plus actions that you can take to make Town Meeting more productive. Survey results follow.

Town Meeting Member Survey - Response rate 64% - 161 Respondents

TOWN MEETING MATERIALS PAPER DOCUMENTS VS THE ONLINE ANNOTATED WARRANT (Novus Agenda)

During last Fall's Special Virtual Town Meeting (VTM):

- 83% of the respondents stated that they used the paper Town Meeting Materials that were hand delivered to their homes and 40% of the respondents said they would not anticipate requesting TMM materials in paper form, and 68% expressed a desire for only printed major reports and a printed Warrant.
- 71% of Town Meeting Members utilized the Online Annotated Warrant prior to Town Meeting, while 63% used it during Town Meeting. Although these documents, and much more, are available online, it is clear that paper documents are helpful for TMMs, especially during the course of the actual Town Meeting.

Our Action Items / Take away

- Based on these responses, unless one specifically opts-out of receiving paper materials, we are going to provide each Town Meeting Member with the usual paper materials. We are hoping to have the packages delivered on April 15th and 16th, 2021.
- Based on the feedback that we received we are working on improvements to the Online Annotated Warrant to provide better explanations and linked content so that it can be more effective for TMMs and the public.

Your Action Items

- If any Board, Commission, Committee, or Warrant Article Proponent wishes to have their Report or Proposed Motions included in packet that is delivered to Town Meeting Members, you must deliver 300 copies to the Select Board's Office no later than Monday, April 12th.
- We will not be distributing paper copies of supporting materials, all such materials will be posted to the Online Annotated Warrant and circulated via the Town Meeting Member email list. These items must be provided to the Moderator to be included on the Online Annotated Warrant. Submission of Motions will follow the 48 hour rule advance filing rule.
- All prerecorded presentation videos must be completed and submitted to ACMi by April 19th. We request that these be limited to five minutes so that you have additional time, 2 minutes, to address the meeting. If you require assistance of ACMi to create your presentation video, please request their assistance by April 12th. Information on where to submit and best practices will be communicated by March 19th.

TRAINING

- Over half of the respondents, 52.4%, reported they did not believe that they needed additional training on the VTM Portal. We are pleased, but not surprised, to see a majority of members adapt to the Portal technology.
- Of those who would like a refresher, 26% said they would watch a video on their own, 14% desired both live and pre-recorded training sessions, and 8% desired only live zoom training.

Our Action Items / Take away

- We understand and strongly encourage the need for additional training and time to learn, plus we do expect new members in 2021. We are planning to provide stand-alone training videos on the Town Meeting Website as well and conduct two live zoom training sessions (dates TBA) prior to Town Meeting for those needing a refresher and a third and mandatory session for newly elected Town Meeting Members.

Your Action Items

- Mandatory training session for new Town Meeting Members during the week of April 18th.
- We will also hold a short dress rehearsal which will include all Town Meeting Members.

VOTING DURING LAST FALL'S SPECIAL VTM

- 52.5% of the Voting Delay issues were caused by user error or Portal Issues. We are hoping that additional training will address the user voting issues and we are working on the Portal to address latency and disconnect issues.

- 83.3% of the respondents were in favor of setting a hard one minute (or less) voting window, and 80% were in favor of an automatic termination.

Our Action Items / Take away

- Based on these responses and my own observation during the Fall Special VTM, I have determined that during the upcoming Annual VTM we will have a one-minute voting window with automatic termination. I will not be calling out TMMs to vote as I did in the Fall Special VTM. The one-minute window will also allow the Town Clerk ample time to field any telephoned in votes and have them recorded.

Your Action Items

- Pay attention to the VTM and be prepared, 52% of voting issues were attributable either to inattention or indecisiveness.

SPEAKING TIME LIMITS

This was a purely informational item. As you are aware our speaking time limits are set by our By Laws, Title 1: Article 1: §C, at a maximum of 7 minutes without further permission. But, 53.3% of respondents believe the time limit should be five (5) minutes.

Please remember my favorite quote when preparing your remarks and speaking, Mr. Jim Doherty, Andover's Moderator until the age of 90, upon the question of time limits for speakers, ***"I don't have a formal limit, but I did tell the meeting that about three minutes is enough for anyone. After five, you put them to sleep. After seven, they're going to vote against you even if they agree with you"***. I urge you to take his sage advice to heart and remember if a point has been made once, there is no need to repeat the same point. That is especially true in a VTM.

CONSENT AGENDA

- 92% of the respondents thought that the Consent Agenda was a useful tool.
- There was a split on the question if one raised hand should be sufficient to remove an item from the consent agenda;
 - a majority, 55.8%, thought that to remove an item should require more raised hands
 - a slight minority, 44.2% thought one hand raised was sufficient

During the Fall Special VTM all of the items were removed from the Consent Agenda, many without reason or supporting Substitute or Amendment Motions. This added many hours to the length of the meeting. We were able to close out approximately five (5) Articles per night in the Fall Special VTM and met for five (5) nights. In the upcoming Annual meeting, we have 91 Articles on the Warrant, at the same Article resolve rate, we will be in session for 18 nights.

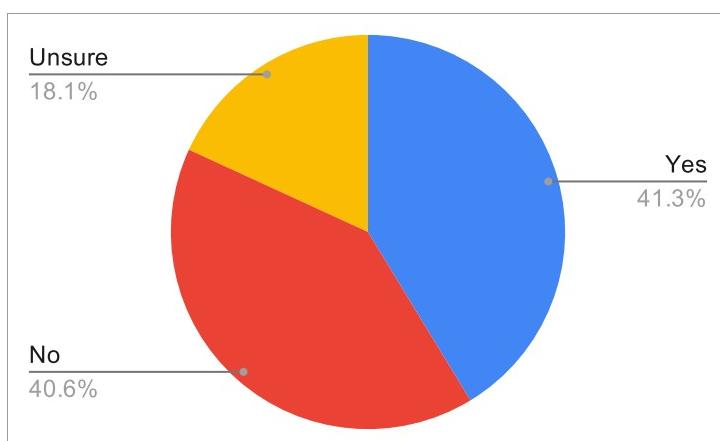
Sincerely



Survey Results about 2020 Special Town Meeting by Town Meeting Members

Conducted: January 31, 2021 - February 12, 2021

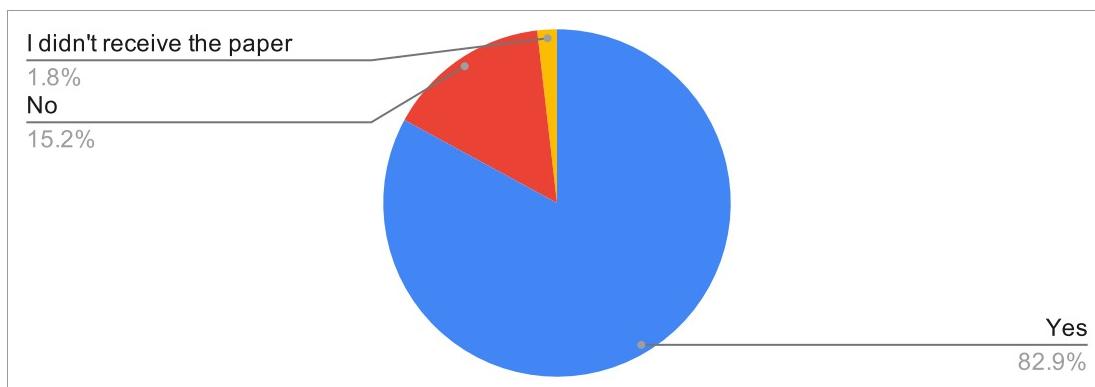
1. Do you anticipate requesting Town Meeting Materials in paper form?



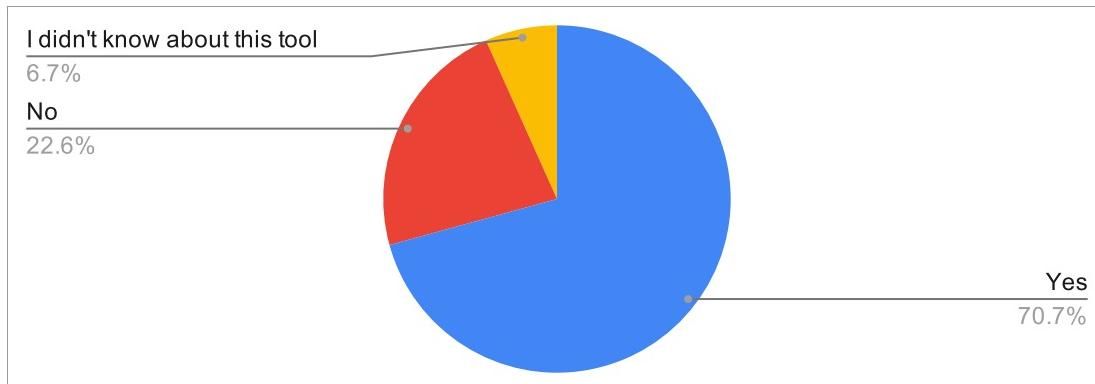
2. Which items may you request? (check all that apply).

Moderator's letter	28	26.17%
Warrant with Articles	70	65.42%
Major reports (Select Board, Finance Committee, Redevelopment Board)	73	68.22%
Unsure	16	14.95%
Total Responses		107

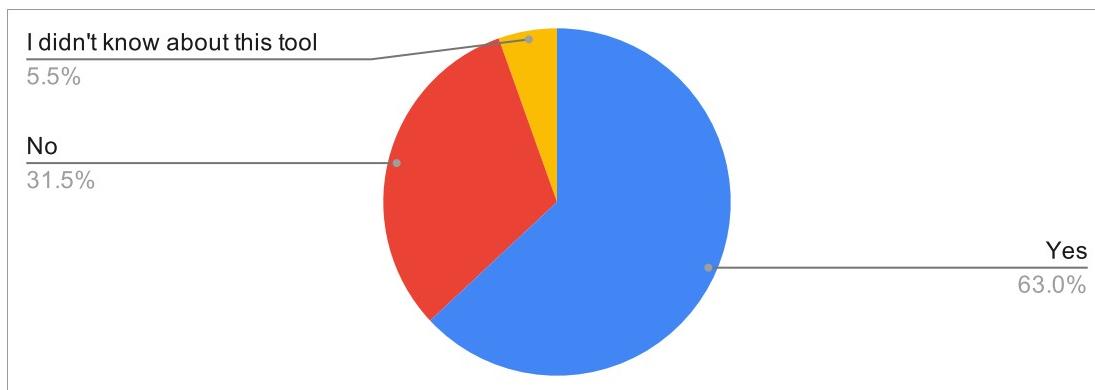
3. In Fall 2020, did you use the Paper reports that were delivered to your home?



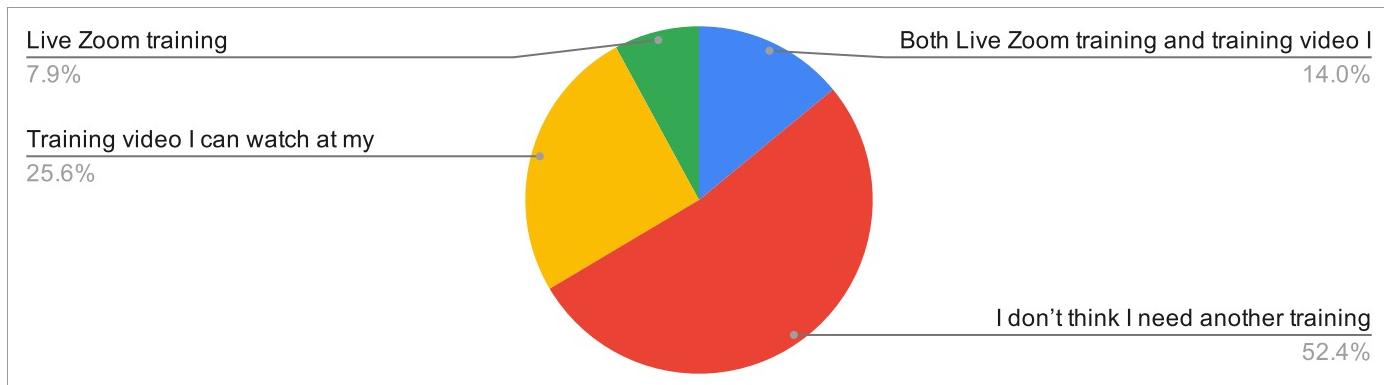
4. Did you use the Interactive Warrant to access these materials PRIOR to the meeting?



5. Did you use the Interactive Warrant to access these materials DURING the meeting?



8. For this year's Spring Annual Town Meeting would you prefer a live Zoom training similar to what we did this fall or would you prefer watching a training video at your convenience?



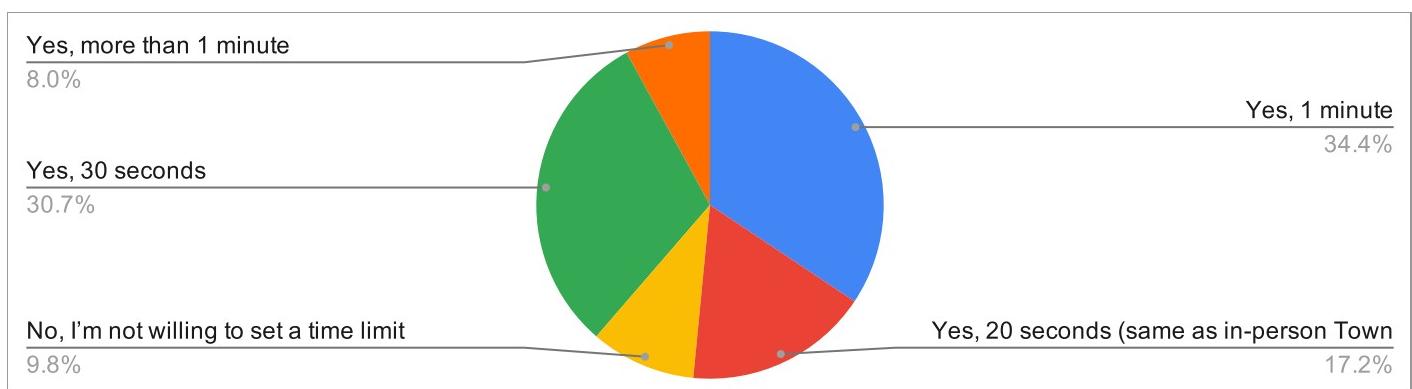
9. To help us with training materials and troubleshooting, what device(s) do you plan to use for the Spring 2021 Annual Town Meeting? (check all that apply).

PC computer/laptop (uses Windows operating system)	93	56.36%
Chromebook (different than a Windows PC and an Apple device)	14	8.48%
Mac computer/laptop (made by Apple)	70	42.42%
iPad (made by Apple)	23	13.94%
Android tablet (like a Samsung)	3	1.82%
iPhone (made by Apple)	16	9.70%
Android Phone (like a Samsung)	1	0.61%
Unsure	0	0.00%
Total Responses	165	

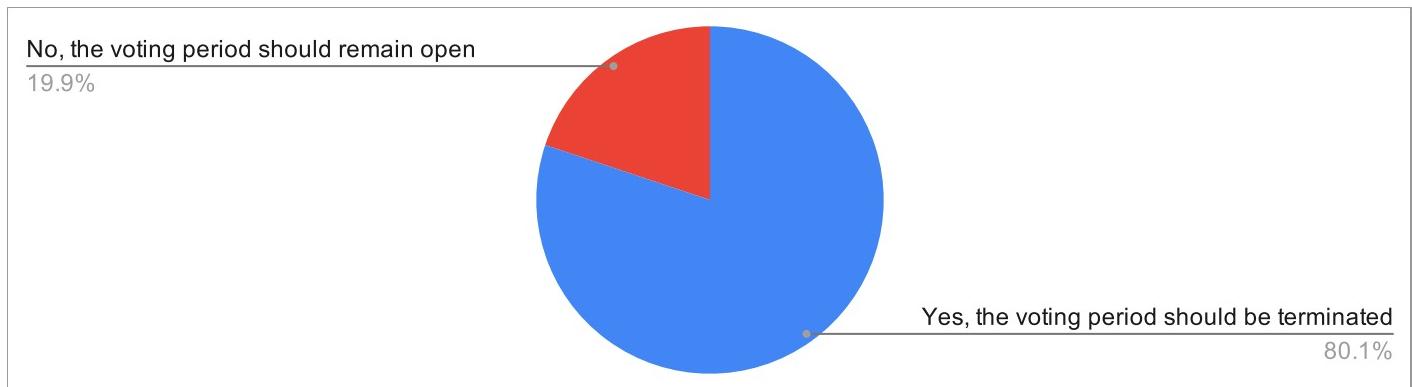
11. What may have prevented you from voting within the traditional 20-second window? (check all that apply).

Trouble navigating to the voting portal	31	22.63%
My screen/database timed out	41	29.93%
I forgot we were voting/I was distracted for personal reasons	27	19.71%
I wasn't clear what we were voting on	27	19.71%
I was indecisive about which way to vote	17	12.41%
Total Responses	137	

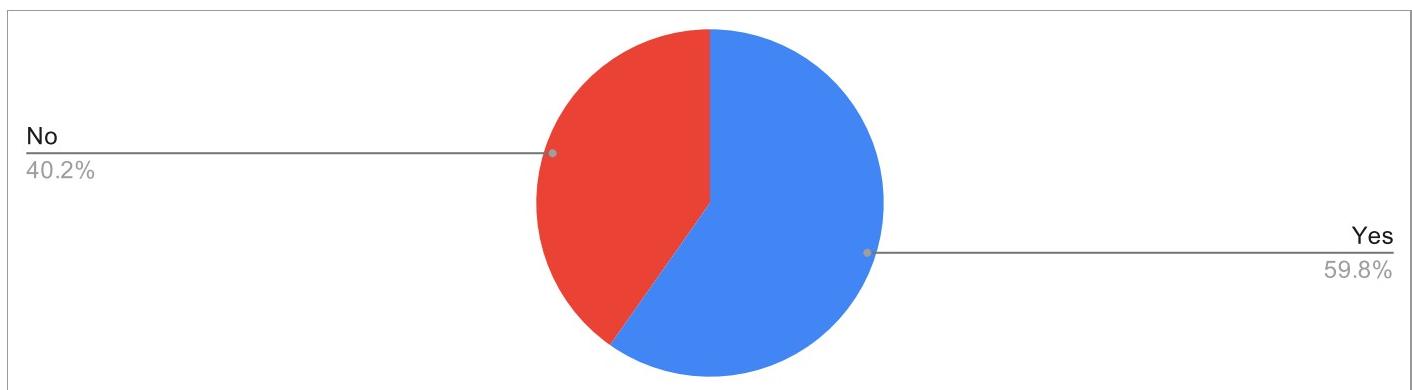
12. Are you willing to set a time limit on voting?



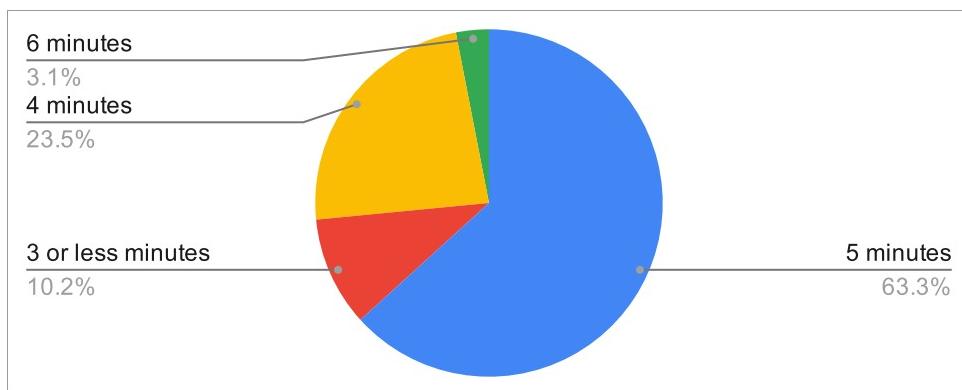
13. If a time limit is set, should Voting be automatically terminated, regardless of if we know some people haven't voted? (This would mirror in-person Town Meeting with the clickers.).



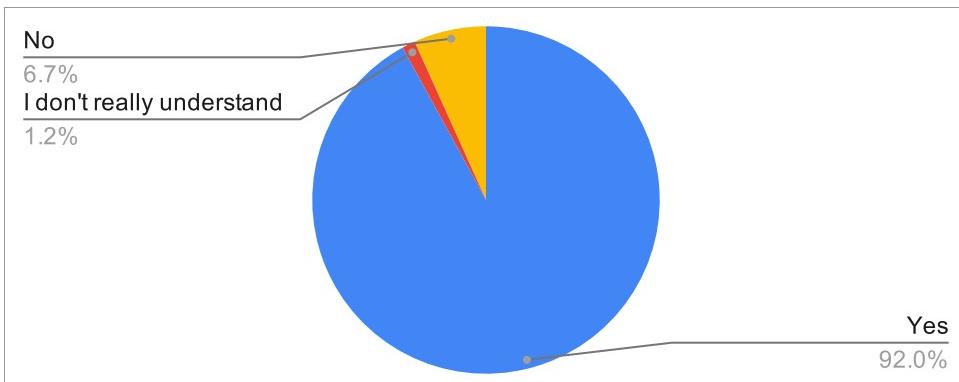
14. Related to presentations and debates, are you willing to reduce the time that each TMM or presenter is allowed to speak, which is currently 7 minutes?



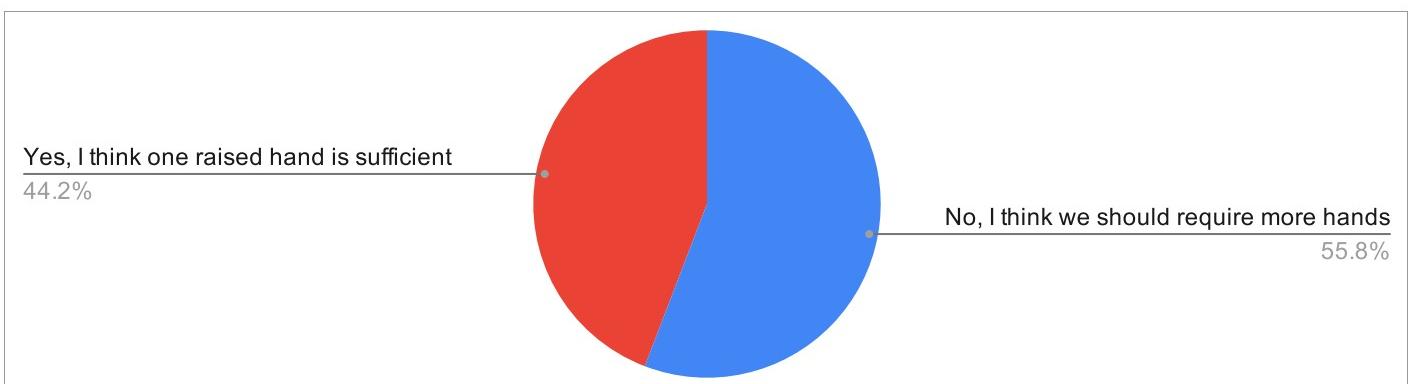
15. If yes to previous question, what amount of time do you consider appropriate?



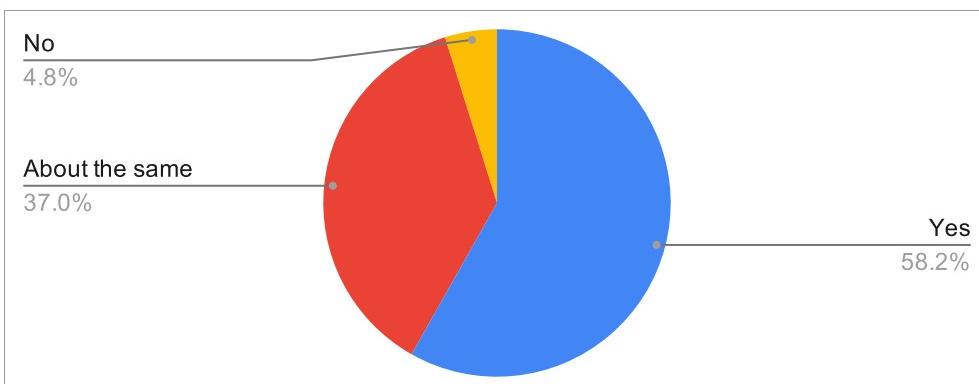
16. Do you think the consent agenda is a useful tool?



17. Currently, an item can be removed from the Consent Agenda if just one TMM "raises their hand." Do you think one TMM "raising their hand" is sufficient to remove an item from the Consent Agenda?



18. Attendance for the Fall 2020 STM was very high for all 5 sessions. Does participating remotely make it easier for you to attend?



19. Putting aside the element of safety, does the convenience of a remote Town Meeting outweigh the benefits of meeting in person?

